Tells the Facts and Names the Names

CounterPunch

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■

"Perhaps part of the difficulty with conflict of interest lies in the phrase itself, which has disparaging connotations. *The Annals of Internal Medicine uses the term* "dual commitment" and asks thors to disclose these to editors. *The Lancet*'s policy is much the same."

— *The Lancet*, 5/19/97.

The Smelly Life of Gen. Fish

The Clinton administration has now authorized Lockheed Martin to offer F-16 fighters to Chile. This step, taken last month in yet another cave-in to the arms industry, ends a 20-year-old ban on the sale of advanced weaponry to South America, which had been imposed during the Carter years when the continent was largely ruled by military regimes.

Overturn of the ban was the object of a fierce lobbying campaign by the arms industry. The effort was particularly intense because Middle Eastern countries, the traditional big volume buyers of American weapons, are uniformly cash-strapped, leaving the arms makers desperate to crack new markets. A key player in the South American battle, though one who operated well behind the scenes, was retired Lt. Gen. Howard Fish, a former Pentagon official who now works as a lobbyist for the Merchants of Death.

Fish is one of thousands of retired Pentagon officials who have established lucrative careers working as consultants to the arms industry. They press for development of needless new weapons systems, urge greater subsidies to the arms industry and lobby the government to approve weapons sales to foreign governments.

A decade ago, journalists and watchdog groups kept a close eye on the revolving door. A mid-1980s study by Common Cause found that 3,745 officers with the rank of major or above went to work for arms contractors between 1983 and 1985. Many signed on with companies whose weapons systems they had overseen while at the Pentagon. Studies like these provoked such a scandal that in 1986 Congress passed a law requiring Defense Department employees to wait at least two years before taking a job with a company whose contracts they handled while at the Pentagon.

As far as we can tell, the Common Cause study was the last detailed look at the phenomenon. Yet the revolving door today is spinning faster than ever, as a quick glance at the roster of arms industry lobbyists reveals.

Robert Helm, a former Pentagon Comptroller, is Northrop's top in-house lobbyist. He joined the company in 1994, replacing Togo West, who had been named secretary of the army. A former secretary of the army, Norman Augustine, currently serves as president of Lockheed. The company's board includes retired Gen. Robert Riscassi, who served on the Pentagon panel that just issued a report on future defense priorities. The panel predictably concluded that armed forces personnel levels should be cut, but the Pentagon's procurement budget should be increased, thereby ensuring future profits for the arms industry. At Lockheed's corporate offices in Bethesda, Maryland, lobbyists include Alan Ptak, a former Navy deputy secretary of defense, and Jack Overstreet, ex-chief of weapons systems at the Air Force.

Here's how one Pentagon veteran and Friend of **CounterPunch** explains the workings of the revolving door:

"What happens in our system is that the services see one of their management duties as placing their retired officers, just like a good university will place its graduates. And the place the services have the most influence at is with the contractors. If you're a good clean-living officer and you don't get drunk at lunch or get caught messing around with the opposite sex in the office, and you don't raise too much of a fuss about horror stories you come across — when you retire, a nice man will come calling. Typically he'll be another retired officer. And

(continued on p. 6)

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Our Little Secret

White-Out: Drugs, the CIA and the Press

There are some things you can't ever say in the corporate press. You can't say the CIA assassinated people. You can't say that US citizens engage in torture, or were present during massacres or death squad activities. And of course you can't say that the CIA has ever been involved in the drug trade.

When Gary Webb of the *San Jose Mercury News* published his famous series on the last of these no-no topics last August, his soundly-based allegations got a good national airing on talk radio and in the virtual chat rooms of the Internet. But as soon as it looked as though his story would turn critical on national TV, the elite corporate press moved in. Webb was the victim of virulent attacks in the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*.

After this heavy barrage, there were further popgun attacks on Webb from the likes of *The Nation*'s David Corn, a noted dust-raker who managed to write an entire book on the CIA's Ted Shackley without ever tripping over so much as a bag of heroin.

Ceppos' was one of the most despicable acts perpetrated by a newspaper executive since ... oh well, probably the previous week.

The main source for most of these attacks was a US district attorney with intelligence connections based in San Diego, L.J. O'Neale. His role is obvious enough because when the Sheriff of Los Angeles County was holding an investigation into Webb's charges as they related to the distribution of crack by "Freeway" Ricky Ross, this same attorney was questioned. The transcripts show the sessions interrupted as O'Neale fields calls from Howard Kurtz and Walter Pincus of the *Post* and briefs them.

But it did at least appear that the *San Jose Mercury News* was standing by its man Webb. Executive editor Jerry Ceppos wrote a letter to the *Washington Post* defending the stories. (The newspaper shamefully refused to publish Ceppos's letter, a deed for which it was duly criticized by its own ombudsman.)

But then at the turn of the year Ceppos took leave to battle prostate cancer. Two months later he returned, according to one colleague, a "changed man". This spring, Ceppos informed Webb that he was going to make a public self-criticism for having published the "Dark Alliance" series of articles, which he intended t characterize as flawed. Bitter words be tween Ceppos and Webb followed.

On May 13, Ceppos ran his column i the *Mercury News*. In the opinion of Ou Little Secret, this was one of the mos despicable acts perpetrated by a newspa per executive since ... oh well, probabl the previous week. There was nothing o substance in Ceppos's criticisms and in deed they were largely culled from a fol low-up commentary done on Webb's worl by another *Mercury* journalist, whose own criticisms had been rebutted by Webb.

The reception given Ceppos' letter i the elite press differed markedly from th reaction to the original series. The *New York Times* immediately called it a "coura geous gesture", gave an entirely mislead ing account of the procedures at th *Mercury News* and then concluded pi ously that this saga should not deter pub lic confidence in investigative reporting In the *Washington Post* Howard Kurtz who launched the first attack on Webb patted himself on the back, saying that b taking responsibility Jerry Ceppos mad the first step toward redeeming the blood ied reputation of the Fourth Estate. O June 3 the *New York Times* returned fo yet another personal attack on Webb.

The *Los Angeles Times* wisely staye quiet, because the newspaper's own hy pocrisy had already been brought to light It had been *Times* reporter Jesse Katz writing in the *Times*, who ridicule Webb's description of Ross's key role i distributing crack in south-central LA But in a *Times* article 18 months earlie Katz had written a 2,400 word articl charging that Ross was the "king of crack" Webb's characterization of Ross was tam in comparison to that of the exuberan Katz, who wrote: "If there was an eye t the storm, if there was a criminal master mind behind crack's decade-long reign, i there was one outlaw capitalist most re sponsible for flooding Los Angeles' streets with mass-marketed cocaine, it wa Freeway Rick."

Once again popguns joined in the bar rage against Webb. A *Nation* editorial b Eric Alterman asserted flatly that Webb' story had committed errors, that "it ha gone too far", that it was "over-hyped' and "sensationalized".

The renewed attack on Webb mus have had the CIA's overseers beside them selves with joy, since the latest spate o

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stories all roundly alleged that there had never been *any* evidence of agency collusion in the drug business. Thus were forgotten in a breath such investigative triumphs as Al McCoy's *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*, Leslie Cockburn's *Out of Control* and the 1989 Senate investigation by Massachusetts Senator John Kerry which conclusively established that the CIA was not only "aware" of drug trafficking but had abetted it.

These days John Kerry is keeping quiet, and Jack Blum, the staffer on the Kerry Committee who frustrated the investigation, now speaks deprecatingly of the Agency's role.

Back in the days of the Kerry Committee, the Reagan administration official covering for the CIA was Deputy Attorney General William Weld. After a spell as Massachusetts governor and after a failed effort to win Kerry's Senate seat, Weld was picked by President Clinton to take up residence as the US ambassador to that great drug-fighting nation, Mexico. The cover-up continues.

We visited with Webb in Sacramento (he works out of the *Mercury News* bureau there) a couple of weeks ago and found him feisty and entirely confident in the veracity of his stories. He has another set of articles ready to go, which he says extends the earlier series. Thus far the new articles are on hold, a situation which we imagine will not change for the better any time soon.

That Guatemala Hit List

Speaking of the CIA and assassinations, the Agency has just released a tiny fraction of the documents it somehow omited to destroy regarding the 1954 coup in Guatemala. Those papers included straightforward tips about how to murder oppositionists in Guatemala and the press here has mentioned other documents which listed 58 Guatemalan leftists scheduled for assassination. The Agency claims none of those people were killed and the entire murder plan was scrapped.

Our spirit of trust is not enhanced by the Agency's decision to delete the names of all of the intended targets. If the names had been left unconcealed, it would have been only a day's work to find out whether all or any of them survived into 1955.

Working at Wanking

They should call Missouri something else and make Vermont the "show me" state. As part of an AIDS education and awareness program, the state is running a wankers' education project for gays. Once the wankers' class has mustered, gays go off in pairs and review masturbation techniques. No touching is permitted. The class remusters and autobiographical embarrassment is avoided by indirect description: "Charles says what he likes to do is ... "

Once the wankers' class has mustered, gays go off in pairs and review masturbation techniques.

In tune with the drive to domesticate gay lifestyle into a simulacrum of the bourgeois married state, the Vermont authorities also run a class in gay dating. Emphasis: don't do it on the first or second date. Class enlistees rehearse come-on lines more demure than a brusque invitation to go into the back room. The most popular intro, according to a Friend of **CounterPunch** present at sessions is: "Hi. My name is John."

Eileen McNamara: Cover-Up Continues

Defenders of Eileen McNamara are stumbling forward. You'll recall from our past Little Secrets that the Pulitzer prize-winning columnist for the *Boston Globe* faked a Salem dateline for a column denouncing a January conference held to reprise the famous Day of Contrition which followed the original witch persecutions.

Dan Kennedy of the *Boston Phoenix* now claims that he was always under the impression that McNamara had never attended the conference. A *Boston Globe* editor also claims that no deception was intended and that McNamara had to file before the conference began.

And indeed columnists and reporters are often in that situation. But they usually make it clear that they are merely setting the scene for events yet to transpire. McNamara began her notorious January 15 column thus: "SALEM – Witches aren't real; child molesters are. That key distinction was missing yesterday from a conference here equating those accused of witchcraft 305 years ago with those accused in our own time of child abuse ... "

It seems to us a dispassionate reading of these lines suggests McNamara sat in a conference and listened to what was being said. Which she didn't. We're no fans of the Pulitzer industry, but if Janet Cooke had to give her prize back, why not McNamara? With her fakery, she helped poison the atmosphere against three innocent people.

Freedom for Bonebrake

On May 6, the criminal trial of Richard Bonebrake, the man who blew the whistle on an amazing scheme to privatize a mothballed nuclear reactor at the Department of Energy's Hanford site, ended with a hung jury. As reported in a recent **CounterPunch**, Bonebrake had been charged with possession of stolen documents from Advance Nuclear Medical Systems, the company that planned to take over the operations of the experimental Fast Flux reactor.

The felony counts could have landed him in jail for more than 15 years. The documents, some of which Bonebrake turned over to the German magazine *Der Spiegel*, showed that the Fast Flux privatization plan, billed as a means to manufacture medical isotopes to treat cancer and AIDS, was in fact a way for the company to make billions producing tritium for hydrogen bombs through contracts with the Department of Energy. The company claimed the Bonebrake papers contained "sensitive" and "proprietary" information valued at more than $1 million.

However, at the trial it was revealed by Tom Carpenter, an attorney with the Government Accountability Project, that most of the so-called "confidential" documents were publicly available from the Department of Energy. Prosecutors announced they will not retry the case. ■

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Send Them Money! The Good Guys in Green — Part Two

We continue here a feature much requested by **CounterPunch** readers who, amid all the slime we write about, keep asking: Who are the good guys? Just the other day a man phoned and asked, "The Trust for Public Lands, the Sierra Club or the Nature Conservancy? Which one should I support?" Answer: None of the above. Since the man was from Wisconsin we pointed him towards SWAN, the Superior Wilderness Action Network in Oshkosh.

In our first inventory, we covered some fine groups working in the areas of environmental justice, wilderness protection and toxics. Here we deal with energy, forests, mining and native issues. In our next installment: international issues, whistleblowers inside the government and in enviro groups and environmental lawyers.

Nothing impacts the environment of the United States so much as its energy policy: the crude drilled, the oil refined, the coal stripped, the hydrodams erected, the uranium tailings dumped across the Indian southwest. So one would expect the green majors to have concentrated their toughest muscle, their most plangent ads, their doughtiest lobbyists in this sphere. Wrong.

As a shorthand indicator of the actual zeal displayed by the majors in this area, we have merely to cite the recent recommendation by the World Wildlife Fund (whose board chairman is Roger Sant, head of the Alexandria, Virginia-based power company AES) to the Canadian government to give a special award for meritorious stewardship of the environment to ... the Shell Oil Company. This is the same Shell Oil Company which has destroyed the Ogoni homeland in Nigeria and which stood by silently as the Ogoni leader, Ken Saro Wiwa, and eight of his fellow campaigners were hanged.

While the World Wildlife Fund sings the praises of Shell, **Project Underground** — based in Berkeley — continues to expose the disgusting behavior of this company, including its recent role in arming the Nigerian security forces in Ogoni land. This feisty little outfit helps communities across the world fight the rampages of the energy giants, such as Unocal's in Burma. (Project Underground, 1847 Berkeley Way, Berkeley, CA 94703)

In Idaho, the **Snake River Alliance** has taken on the nuclear energy establishment of that crazed state: the Idaho National Engineering Lab, the Department of Energy, the US Navy and Lockheed-Martin. The Alliance has drawn enough blood to be included near the top of the DOE's enemies list (complied by Hazel O'Leary) and named in a recent security assessment of the Idaho National Guard (though the info probably came from US Naval Intelligence) as an "opposing force" that needs close scrutiny. (Snake River Alliance, Box 1731, Boise, ID 83701. Tel. 208-344-9161).

One would expect the green majors to have concentrated their toughest muscle and doughtiest lobbyists on energy policy. Wrong.

So far as forests are concerned the current line of the national groups (not a dime to any of them) is that they drew blood against the Republicans for the salvage logging rider two years ago, even though few timber sales under the law were stopped. They are now demonizing that great legislator Senator Larry Craig of Idaho (most recently seen endorsing Rep. Helen Chenoweth's demand that the Forest Service stop recruiting Hispanics and blacks to work for the agency in Idaho, claiming that "people from warmer climates don't do well in Idaho") as a sylvan remake of Vlad the Impaler.

Craig, it should also be noted, is circulating legislation concocted by timber industry lobbyist Stephen Quarrles that would turn over management of the national forests to the states. But the bill is largely bombast with zero chance of passing — though it serves as great fodder for fundraising letters from the mainstream greens.

Meanwhile, the Wilderness Society and the Sierra Club keep quiet as mice about what the Clinton administration is up to. Which is a lot, all of it bad. The latest chapter in infamy has been (as predicted in **CounterPunch** three issues ago) a government logging plan for the Tongass National Forest in Alaska, as generous to Louisiana-Pacific as any envisaged by the Bush administration.

On the ground, some people are out there actually saving forests. Back in Larry Craig's home state, the most hostile terrain in the nation for any friend of nature, the **Idaho Sporting Congress** has dealt savage blows to the scoundrelly custodians of the Boise National Forest, long operated as a private woodlot for Boise-Cascade, the largest timber company in the state. In the last two years, Ron Mitchell, director of the Sporting Congress, has exposed numerous instances of timber theft, illegal logging in endangered species habitat and complicity in these actions by government employees. As a consequence of bringing this lawlessness to light, Mitchell has been harassed by US District Attornies, demanding the names and addresses of anyone who had ever been associated with the Sporting Congress. (You may want to send Mitchell a travellers cheque.) Idaho Sporting Congress, 805 West Idaho Street, Boise, ID 83702. Tel. 208-336-7222.

In the past ten years the big timber companies have relocated from the ravaged west back to the east. One consequence has been the construction of some 250 chip mills along the southern Appalachian Mountains and in the Ohio River Valley. Each mill can consume 17,000 acres of hardwood trees a year to make cardboard, rayon and paper. Since more than 80 per cent of forest lands east of the Rockies are in private/corporate hands the attack has been ignored by the

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big green groups, loathe to challenge the sacred rights of property. Into this gap has sprung the Dogwood Alliance, a coalition of some thirty grassroots groups from Pennsylvania to Louisiana. For more information contact the Dogwood Alliance, P.O. Box 4826 Chattanooga, TN 37405-0826. Tel. 770-867-0197.

The politics of mining haven't changed much since 1872, when Ulysses S. Grant signed the General Mining Act which gave away mineral rich federal lands for as little as $2.50 an acre. This has yielded a bonanza of billions to gold and silver mining companies, many of them owned by Canadian moguls. The mining law has also proved to be an environmental nightmare, since it doesn't compel the companies to perform any clean-up after excavating mile-wide holes in the earth.

Nothing better illustrates the disaster of environmentalism in Clinton time than the failure to reform this archaic law. The national greens pool their resources into an outfit called the Mineral Policy Center, which lost what little credibility it ever had when it gave a ringing endorsement to Clinton's proposal to swap other federal lands for Noranda's mining rights just outside Yellowstone Park. Only two groups stood against the Gadarene rush to laud Clinton's deal: the **Montana Environmental Information Center** and the **Center for Environmental Equity**.

The Montana Center is led by Jim Jensen, who correctly pointed out that the likely consequence of Clinton's Yellowstone deal would merely be to shift the mine to someone else's front yard in an area lacking the sacred aura of Yellowstone. Jensen's group also went out on a limb two years ago to attack Senator Max Baucus, the Montana Democrat, for his hidden interest in a half billion dollar gold mine planned for the banks of the Blackfoot River (site of Norman Maclean's novel *A River Runs Through It*). Montana Environmental Information Center, PO Box 1184, Helena, MT 59624. Tel. 406-443-2520.

When Yellowstone was front page news in the summer of 1995, Larry Tuttle, who runs the Center for Environmental Equity, pointed out that the whole crisis could have been averted if only Clinton had pushed the Democratically-controlled Congress of 1993-1994 to enact mining law reform. Instead, the measure failed by a single vote.

Now on the 125th anniversary of the mining law, and with Republicans in control of both houses of Congress, Tuttle has issued a challenge to the Mineral Policy Center and other big green outfits: forego phony and futile attempts to advance mining law reform and instead push the Clinton administration to use its executive powers to withdraw all federal lands from new mining claims. Center for Environmental Equity, 610 SW Alder, Suite 1021, Portland, OR 97205. Tel. 503-221-1683.

Now for groups campaigning for the rights of Native Americans – germane to any environmental conspectus, since native rights always debouch onto land-use issues. One of the last skirmishes between federal troops and American Indians involved attempts to round up bands of the Shoshone-Bannock tribe in the Great Basin country of Idaho, Nevada and Utah. Today the war against the Shoshone continues, only on different fronts and led by new arms of the federal government, such as the Bureau of Land Management and the Department of Energy.

Coyne has said that the Vatican is involved in the deep space telescope project in order to search out intelligent alien life in distant recesses of the universe, beings which the Church would be obligated to bring "into the fold and baptize".

Fighting back is the **Western Shoshone Defense Project** which has won a string of amazing victories, including: fending off an attempt by the Bureau of Land Management to confiscate Shoshone horses and cattle from traditional lands in the Ruby Valley; frustrating Jimmy Carter's mad plan to turn Shoshone lands in Nevada into the nesting habitat of the MX missile; and beating back numerous schemes by hydro-engineers at the Bureau of Reclamation to dam that precious trickle of desert water known as the Humboldt River. Now the Shoshones are battling the Department of Energy's plans to transport nuclear waste across Shoshone land to the Idaho National Energy Labs and the "interim nuclear storage facility" at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. Western Shoshone Defence Project, PO Box 211106, Crescent Valley, NV 89821. Tel. 802-468-0237.

In southern Arizona, the San Carlos Apaches – one of the nation's most impoverished tribes – is fighting off plans by the University of Arizona, the Max Planck Institute and the Vatican to build a huge astronomical observatory on the summit of one of the tribe's most sacred sites, Mt. Graham. Leading this long and brutal struggle is the **Apache Survival Coalition** and 76-year-old Ola Cassadore-Davis, a spiritual leader of the Apaches who has described Mt. Graham as one of the tribe's most holy places and as a home to Apache divinities known as ga'an or rain spirits.

Mt. Graham also plays a central role in the Apache myth regarding the origin of horses. Father George Coyne, the Vatican's astronomer, has repeatedly denigrated the Apaches' claims to the mountain, calling their cosmology "a religiosity to which I cannot subscribe and which must be suppressed with all the force that we can muster". Coyne has said that the Vatican is involved in the deep space telescope project in order to search out intelligent alien life in distant recesses of the universe, beings which the Church would be obligated to bring "into the fold and baptize". "First of all", Father Coyne has observed, "one would need to put some questions to him, such as 'Have you ever experienced something similar to Adam and Eve, in other words, original sin? And then you would have to ask, Do you people know a Jesus who has redeemed you?" Despite the nearly omnipotent forces arrayed against them, the Apaches have scored some recent impressive victories, knocking out three of the planned scopes and scaring off several other partners in the project, such as the University of Michigan. Apache Survival Coalition, PO Box 1237, San Carlos, AZ 85550. ■

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Yes, It's Super-Cruise!

The Quadrennial Defense Review recently unveiled by the Pentagon has been hailed by a predictably deferential press, happy to swallow the mendacious nostrums of Defense Secretary Cohen and Joint Chiefs Chairman Shalikashvili. Among the boondoggles that have survived the "review" is the F-22 fighter. This program is of course financially sick, which is why the projected buy has been cut back from 438 to 339, though whether or not this will bring down the anticipated price per plane from an estimated $175 million each remains to be seen.

Any further assaults on its beloved F-22 will be fended off by the Air Force with references to the superlative technology of the fighter, due to go into service early in the next millennium. However, Friends of **CounterPunch** assert that the program, in addition to its ballooning costs, is "technically sick" as well.

Central to the boasts touted for the F-22 by the Air Force and Lockheed Martin, is the claim that it will have "Supercruise" — i.e. the ability to fly for long distances above the speed of sound. To do this a plane must have engines that consume fuel very efficiently as well as capacious fuel reserves. A plane's fuel capacity is commonly expressed as the "fuel fraction", meaning the proportion of fuel to the total weight of the plane when the tanks are full. Originally, the contractors aimed for a fraction of .33. With the first prototype that figure shrank to just above .3 — a drop in fuel capacity of 10 per cent. Now it looks as if the fuel fraction is down to a scrawny .29. To this must be added the fact that the specific fuel consumption of the engines is 14 per cent more than contracted for, not to mention the escalating weight of the aircraft — up to some 35 tons.

In all it seems clear that the F-22 will be able to fly short distances at no great speed before turning for home. There are further penalties, in that the design of the wing is specifically tailored for the supersonic cruise function. If, however, it is spending most of its time at slower speeds, maneuvering will require more power and therefore even greater consumption of fuel. As one air force official elegantly summarizes the situation, "This plane could turn out to be a real piece of shit if it doesn't have supersonic cruise."

A further claim for the F-22 has been that it will be amazingly "stealthy", that is, practically invisible to radar. A plane's relative visibility to radar is predicated on its "Radar Cross Section" or RCS. The taxpayers will wait in vain for an objective assessment of the F-22's RCS, since the Pentagon, under the official Clinton-era mandate of "harmony" between arms manufacturers and the military, has feebly agreed that Lockheed itself will supervise all measurements of the RCS.

Meanwhile the Air Force, in the face of a $15 billion overrun, is talking about foreign sales. "If we were to successfully engage in sales, we'll even further bring down the cost of this airplane program," declared one Air Force official recently without a trace of irony in her voice.

Nonetheless, it is ironic that they should be planning on foreign sales. In the internal Air Force presentation "F-22: A Revolution in Air Power", the threats facing the US that mandate acquisition of the plane include 1,270 F-16s, 330 F-15s and 270 F/A 18s, all sold abroad by Lockheed and McDonnell Douglas. Presumably, once sufficient F-22s have been unloaded on the foreigners, that "threat" can be used as justification for the next boondoggle.

To summarise. It appears clear that the F-22 is headed for that great pantheon of financial and technical disasters occupied by, among others, the B-1 and B-2 bombers. Between them, those two have so far eaten up some $80 billion of public funds. The B-1 has proven so technically faulty that it is already being passed on to the Air National Guard, where it can presumably lead a productive life bombing marijuana plantations. ■

(Fish, continued from p. 1)

he'll be driving a fancy car, a Mercedes or equivalent, and wearing a $2,000 suit and Gucci shoes and Rolex watch. He will offer to make a comfortable life for you by getting you a job at one of the contractors. Now, if you go around kicking people in the shins, raising hell about the outrages committed by the big contractors, no nice man comes calling. It's that simple."

Retired Lt. Gen. Fish provides a particularly illuminating case of the revolving door in action. During the Nixon and Ford administrations, Fish headed the Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA), the Pentagon bureau that handles foreign military sales and one of the more corrupt components of the military establishment. The DSAA has a field staff of about 1,000 people who work out of US embassies in some 75 countries. They offer everything from briefings on weapons systems to demonstrations of major aircraft, in addition to arranging financing needed to close a deal.

The DSAA receives a 3 per cent commission per sale — which provides about 80 per cent of its operating budget — and agency personnel are promoted on the basis of their ability to move weaponry. With this dynamic, says a 1991 report from Congress's now defunct Office of Technology Assessment, "there is powerful incentive for DSAA personnel to make as many sales as possible".

As head of the DSAA, Fish was an exuberant promoter of weapons sales to any and all buyers. William Hartung of the World Policy Institute says Fish played a key role in watering down the Arms Export Control Act of 1976, which would have placed a ceiling on total foreign arms sales and given Congress the right to veto sales on human rights grounds.

The taint of scandal marked Fish's entire career at the Pentagon. "He was totally uninhibited by questions of right and wrong," says a former Pentagon staffer who remembers Fish well. "There was never a question of ethics in anything he did."

During the early 1970s, this F.O.C. says, Fish was among several officials who were found to have leaked classified information about contractual matters to Lockheed and LTV Aerospace & Defense. The affair caused a huge scandal inside the Pentagon, but Fish escaped censure.

At roughly the same time, Fish became heavily involved in weapons sales programs to Iran, then headed by the Shah. The arms trade was hideously corrupt, with "brokers" for US companies — who received huge commissions —

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bribing Iranian officials in order to close deals. Even the Shah, who suspected correctly that the arms makers were tacking brokers' fees and bribes on to the final bill submitted to the Iranians, was incensed. But when he tried to cut out the brokers and eliminate bribes Fish fought him every inch of the way, claiming that this would impinge on the flexibility contractors needed to do business.

Fish also placed his closest cronies — Richard Secord, then at the Pentagon and later a player in the Iran/contra affair, and Erich von Marbod, who served as Fish's second in command at the DSAA — in key roles in the Iranian arms sales programs. Von Marbod scored a major coup when he convinced the Iranians to put up a $5 billion special account as an advance payment on future arms purchases. Much of that money disappeared and was never accounted for. A GAO investigation concluded that the bookkeeping was so hopeless that it would be impossible to determine if the money was spent legitimately.

Later in the decade Fish began to take a keen interest in Egypt, as that nation was coming on-line as a major buyer of US weaponry. Fish was further spurred to immerse himself in all things Egyptian because of the torrid personal ties he had forged with a secretary at the Egyptian embassy in Washington.

Under the 1978 Camp David accords, Egypt was to receive $1 billion per year in military aid. To ship weapons to the Egyptians, the Pentagon signed an exclusive contract with a company called Eatsco, which was formed by an Egyptian government official, Hussein K. Salem, and a retired CIA official, Thomas Clines, another future participant in the Iran/contra scandal. A third principal, though a silent one, was Edwin Wilson, the retired CIA agent who was living in Libya at the time and providing military equipment and training to the government of Muammar Quaddafi.

It later turned out that Eatsco had overbilled the Pentagon by $8 million on shipment to the Egyptians. It further emerged that Eatsco had two additional principals, both silent partners who worked inside the government. These were Fish's protégés, Secord and von Marbod. Both were forced to retire from the Pentagon, though the reason was hushed up. Von Marbod took an especially creative approach, claiming that his career had come to a halt as a result of severe narcolepsy.

Fish's work at the Pentagon provided him with the perfect resumé when he decided to retire from government in the late-1970s. He quickly found work with LTV, one of the two firms he had leaked classified information to a few years earlier. One of his first acts was to hire von Marbod, whose narcolepsy had apparently abated, to work at LTV's Paris offices.

Fish later worked as the head of international marketing for Loral, another big weapons maker, and then took charge of the American League for Exports and Security Assistance (ALESA) in the late 1980s. The latter outfit is one of the many powerful trade groups formed by arms makers — others include the Aerospace Industries Association and the American Defense Preparedness Association — to lobby for higher military outlays at home and greater US military involvement abroad.

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One of Fish's chief missions was to promote weapons sales to the Middle East. Back in 1989, Fish met privately with chief of staff John Sununu and National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft in a successful effort to convince the Bush administration to sell front-line tanks and supersonic fighters to Arab countries.

One impressive display of Fish and ALESA's lobbying abilities came in the early 1990s, when weapons makers formed the Middle East Action Group to press for deals with the Saudis. This coalition of weapons makers, which also mustered GE, Ford, Bechtel, Boeing and the US-Arab Chamber of Commerce, devised a lobbying campaign detailed in a 300-page strategy book obtained and provided to us by Hartung. The coalition assigned individuals to work with the White House, the State Department, the National Security Council, the Pentagon, key committees of Congress, the media, think tanks, veterans groups and "patriotic" organizations. It also called for member companies to mobilize their workers, middle managers and executives to flood Washington with telegrams and phone calls supporting arms sales.

Another group focused on putting the best possible spin on these unpalatable transactions. Among the flagrantly self-serving themes developed for public consumption were that "the sooner we bolster the Saudi military, the sooner ... [US military personnel in Saudi Arabia] will be able to return to the United States" and that "blocking arms sales ... is a sure way to cripple our economy and cause unnecessary layoffs of thousands of professionals." The Coalition didn't get everything it asked for, but its member companies succeeded in forcing billions of dollars worth of deals through Congress during the next few years.

More recently, Fish turned his attention to the ban on sales to South America. Fish wore two hats during the South American campaign, one as a representative of ALESA and the other as a member of the Pentagon's Defense Policy

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Advisory Committee on Trade (DPACT), an illustrious and no doubt impartial panel that provides confidential recommendations to the Secretary of Defense on the sale of weapons abroad. Members are lsrgrly drawn from industry and have included CEOs from Lockheed, Boeing, Northrop Grumman and McDonnell Douglas.

Of course the last thing South America needs is an arms race to acquire a new generation of high-priced weaponry. Most of its countries have only recently emerged from long periods of military dictatorship and the armed forces remain powerful. Furthermore, South American governments are sunk in debt and have little money available to pay for social programs, let alone F-16s.

Until 1994, the Clinton administration stood in favor of maintaining the arms embargo. That year it prevented Lockheed from attending an international air show in Chile. The arms makers were outraged, particularly as Britain, France, Israel, Russia and vendors from at least two dozen other companies used the show to hawk their wares.

A further obstacle to renewed sales was that South American nations had not expressed any real interest in buying advanced weaponry, least of all the fighter planes the arms makers were so keen to offload. In 1982, Venezuela had received a waiver from the Reagan administration that allowed it to buy 26 F-16s, but the country did not have the money to fly or maintain the planes. Most sat parked in Air Force hangars.

To start the ball rolling, DPACT's export policy subcommittee, where Fish holds a seat, issued a 1995 study calling for a "balanced policy" that would allow South American nations to meet "the demands ... for needed equipment modernization". Another panel member, Joel Johnson of the Aerospace Industries Association, claimed that the US was treating South Americans "like children when we say they can't have new planes".

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During the 1996 campaign, the arms lobby got the GOP to include a plank in its platform promising that the Clinton administration's "policy of denying most Latin American countries the opportunity to replace their obsolescent military equipment ... will be reversed by a Republican administration". That same year, more than 100 members of Congress signed on to two separate letters to Clinton administration — letters drafted by the arms makers themselves — claiming that the Latin ban had cost US companies $4 billion in exports and 40,000 jobs.

The arms lobby also moved to sweep away demand side barriers. As *Time* magazine reported, the Pentagon in March of 1996 sent advanced fighters to Chile for an air show. The DoD also arranged for Puerto Rican National Guard pilots to fly Brazilian generals in F-16s. Within months, both Brazil and Chile had contacted the Pentagon to inquire about possible sales.

The rest was simple. When William Perry resigned as secretary of defense in 1997 he wrote a letter to Clinton urging him to remove the ban. Perry's successor, William Cohen, also began lobbying for the change shortly after he joined the administration. This spring saw Clinton's capitulation, with the president giving Lockheed the green light to open talks with the Chileans about the sale of F-16s. Clinton will soon unveil a draft policy on arms sales to South America virtually identical to the one proposed by DPACT in its original 1995 rep ort.

Incidentally, Fish was no longer at the American League when the final victory was attained. He had recently left his post there to become a consultant to Lockheed — the company to which he leaked classified data back in the 1970s and the primary beneficiary of the end to the ban on sales to South America. ■

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